(b) The Committee followed the established procedure for taking decision on the matter.

(c) The proposals are processed on merits of the case and if any additional information is required to take a decision, the concerned State/UT Government is requested to provide the same.

Commercial cultivation of Bt. Brinjal

1101. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee has decided to permit commercial cultivation of Bt. Brinjal in the country;

(b) whether pro-farmer lobbies and activists argue that GM food will destroy all traditional crops and make farmers and consumers bonded slaves to giant agri-business combines;

(c) whether Government has considered, while clearing Bt brinjal cultivation in the country, the rational consequences and risks that GM crops/ foods present *viz*: allergic reactions, gene transfer and outcrossing; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC) in its meeting held on 14.10.2009 has recommended to the Government that Bt brinjal is safe for environmental release taking into consideration the findings of the review by three high level technical Committees. The decision of the GEAC on the safety of Bt brinjal for environmental release is based on scientific facts/data generated during 2002-2009 and international experience with genetically modified (GM) crops. The Ministry has received strong views both in favour and against commercialization of Bt brinjal in India from the various stakeholders including the State Governments, farmers, civil societies, NGOs and scientists. The involvement of public institutions such as Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Coimbatore, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad and Indian Institute of Vegetable Research, Varanasi in the development of Bt brinjal would ensure that cultivation of Bt brinjal is a viable proposition to the farmers. Further, the data generated on the safety, efficacy and performance of Bt brinjal concludes that Bt brinjal is expected to provide enhanced economic benefits to farmers accrued from higher marketable yield and lower usage of pesticide sprays. These findings are in conformity with the Bt cotton experience in India and international experience with GM crops.

(c) and (d) The Government of India is following a policy of case by case approval of GM crops. In view of various concerns related to the safety, efficacy and agronomic performance of transgenic seeds, extensive evaluation and regulatory approval process takes place before any GM plant is approved for commercial cultivation. This includes generation of relevant biosafety information and its elaborate analysis to ensure food, feed and environmental safety. The

environmental safety assessment includes studies on pollen escape out-crossing, aggressiveness and weediness, effect of the gene on non-target organisms, presence of protein in soil and its effect on soil micro-flora, confirmation of the absence of terminator gene and baseline susceptibility studies. The food and feed safety studies include assessment on composition analysis, allergenicity and toxicological studies and feeding studies on fish, chicken, cows and buffaloes. In case, the transgenic crop is not found suitable for release in the environment or human consumption, the product is rejected during the trial stage itself. A final view on the commercialization of GM plants is taken only when there is a clear economic and technical justification for release of the product.

Impact of foreign plants and trees

†1102. SHRI ANIL MADHAV DAVE:
SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the impact and results of the plans that were formulated to promote the plantation of eucalyptus and other similar species;

(b) whether there has been any impact of the plants and trees of foreign species on the soil, water or environment of the country; and

(c) whether any assessment has been made to ascertain the consequential benefits and disadvantages and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) National Forest Policy, 1988 envisage a massive need base and time bound programme of afforestation and tree planting, with particular emphasis on fuel-wood and fodder development, on all denuded lands in the country, whether forest or non forest land. Government of India promote plantations of trees under different plantations schemes. As per report of National Forest Commission (1986), Forest plantations area in India is 32.57 million ha. and major species are teak, rosewood, eucalyptus and acacias which accounts for 17% of global plantations.

(b) and (c) No such specific studies have been carried out by Indian Council of Forest Research and Education and its institutes. However, as per literature available eucalyptus plantations do not lower down the water table.

River pollution

1103. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the rivers which have been declared dead due to industrial and man made activities resulting in extreme pollution as in the case of Yamuna in Delhi;

(b) what are the reasons that Government has not so far learnt any lesson to revive Yamuna and other such rivers, from the rivers abroad like Hudson in New York,

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.